

Factors Contributing Students' Performance in Adolescence

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ABSTRACT

Students' performance and achievement in middle school has been the subject of concern among educators, and strategy makers. Most of the previous studies on academic performance of students focused on issues like teacher education, class environment, gender difference, teaching style, family educational background and socioeconomic factor. The present study focuses on factors that affect students' performance in adolescence in particular. It specially examines influence of social skills on academic performance along with other essential factors that contributes for improved performance. The study brings to light how performance of students is affected by psychological, economical, social, personal and environmental factors. Trust and a feeling of belonging appear to be key factors to strengthen student relationships and to support academic achievement during the transition to middle level schools. The study also reveals that the most important factor that determines student's performance is the student's aptitude and competence in required Language. Besides competence in English, students who participate in class discussion outperform other students.

Keywords: *Adolescence, Academic performance, Aptitude, social skills, Transition.*

I. INTRODUCTION

For any educational institute students are most important asset. Economic and social development of a country is directly associated with academic performance of students. The academic performance of the students' has gained significant attention in past researches. Performance of students is affected by psychological, economic, social, personal and environmental factors. Though these factors strongly influence the performance of the students but these factors differ from country to country and person to person. Adolescence is a period of transition: a time of self-discovery, emerging independence, and physical and emotional growth. Unfortunately, middle school students are faced with so many stresses at this growing age. Trust and a feeling of belonging appear to be key factors to strengthen student relationships and to support academic achievement. Kennedy and Tay (1994) concluded in their survey article that the research on the factors affecting students' performance in middle and secondary school points out to student's aptitude as the most important determinant of learning. Previous studies engaged the Grade Point Average, as a common indicator of the performance of the students.

Study effort, age of student, and a good match between student's learning style and instructor's teaching style all have positive effect on student's performance. Cohn *et al* (1995) found that memory and note-taking affect learning in the introductory courses. Ellis *et al* (1998) in their study on the factors affecting student performance found that the likelihood of a student making a grade of A or B significantly decreases as the number of absences increases; when the student is a member of fraternity ; and as the number of credit hours carried by the student during the term increases. [3]

Previous studies reveal that age and students attitude toward school and teacher and environment have significant effect on students' performance. Karemera (2003) found that students' performance is significantly correlated with satisfaction with academic environment and service received. He also found that the motivation and exposure opportunities are associated with better academic performance. With regard to background variables, he found a positive effect of high school performance and school achievement while there was no statistical evidence of significant association between family income level and academic performance. There are cultural differences between modern societies and traditional societies, and such differences may play a role in shaping the factors that affect this performance. Another factor that may affect students' performance is family size which differs significantly among different ethnic and economic sub-groups. On the other hand, since the language of instruction in most of the schools is English, students' competence in English is included in affecting students' performance. [4]

II. NEED OF SCHOLASTIC APTITUDE

Scholastic aptitude develops in relation to students' increasing skills and abilities. It has three interrelated elements: (i). Language and literacy skills include listening, speaking, reading and writing. (ii).Study skills include flexible and appropriate use of strategies for managing materials, time, and language. (iii).Self-efficacy (the belief that one's actions are related to outcomes) includes skills in self-awareness, self-assessment, and self-advocacy. All of these skills are coordinated by executive function, which is the brain's super-manager and empowers students to set goals, marshal the various internal and external resources needed to meet them, and make adjustments to ensure accomplishment. Executive function enables students to maintain focus, progress, and motivation; make connections with existing knowledge; recognize when comprehension falters; and apply strategies to modulate frustration and resolve lapses in understanding. [5]

III. INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL SKILLS ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN ADOLESCENTS

Establishing positive relationships with peers and developing socially are extremely important for all children in middle school. Children who have difficulties in these areas are more likely to suffer from problems in other areas of their lives, for example they may have a low sense of self-esteem and underachieve in academic work. When a child relates well to others it promotes positive feelings toward self and others (Cowie, Smith, Boulton & Laver, 1994). Social interactions can be difficult for English as Second Language students. Being surrounded

by a new language and culture make interacting with adults and peers more challenging. Middle school students struggle socially with positive inter-group relations and self-esteem. Specifically, these students lack the knowledge of when and how to use the social skills like asking for help or clarification,, participating actively, respecting others, describing feelings, taking turns, sharing ideas and opinions in a group setting. Unfamiliarity with English and school in general causes adolescents to struggle with social relationships, social skills. These problems with social development might decrease if these students are given social skill instruction and opportunities to interact with peers. [3]

As stated above students struggle with social interactions in a school setting. These challenges make learning difficult and impact academic performance. Developing in a social context forms the basis for academic growth. Establishing trust and providing a setting where students feel a sense of belonging contribute to community development. Children have certain basic psychological needs and are more likely to become engaged in the learning process when the learning environment is well-matched with those needs (Newmann, Wehlage, & Lamborn, 1992). The need to belong has been identified as one of the chief psychological needs that children seek at school and elsewhere in their interactions with others. If this need is not satisfied within the academic program, the student feels isolated from the classroom (Coelho, 1994) and their academic work will suffer (Cowie et al., 1994). Social skills affect all parts of a child's life in adolescence in particular. Many students are no longer taught how to interact effectively with others by parents and peers because of changes in the structure of family, neighbourhood, and community life. The effects that social skills have on a child's academic performance requires that schools become more involved in teaching social skills (Johnson, Johnson & Holubec, 1998). [2]

IV. FACTORS CONTRIBUTING FOR IMPROVED ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN ADOLESCENCE

1.1. Competence of students in Language of instruction

Lack of proficiency in the language of instruction is an important factor in the lower academic performance of minority students. Cummins attributes the failure of many minority students to develop the language skills necessary to achieve academic success to the teacher-cantered methodology that is used in many classrooms. An interactive environment, on the other hand, develops higher level cognitive skills and meaningful, communicative language skills (Coelho, 1994).

The most significant factor with the positive outcome on the performance of the students is competence of students in English. Good communication skills expand the students' performance (Abdullah, 2011). William & Burden (1997) found that language classrooms inculcate confidence among students to use the new language to communicate, to discuss, to try new ways of conveying meanings and to be trained from failures and successes. Robert and Sampson (2011) investigated that the students who effectively participate in the learning procedure are seen to have a higher CGPA (cumulative grade point average). Noble (2006), found that academic

activities of students, perceptions of their adapting strategies and back-ground , were indirectly connected to their compound scores, during academic achievement in secondary school.

1.2. Direction from the educator and Guardians

Direction is a component through which a student knows how to progress his study approach and study schedule and is directly corresponding to academic accomplishment. The students who are appropriately guided by their guardians have done well in the exams. The direction from the educator also influences performance of the students. Kochhar (2000) says proper guidance is necessary to help the students with problems like lack of correlation between talent and achievement, faulty study practice, imperfect methods of learning. The guidance from the guardians and the educators indirectly influence the students' performance (Hussain, 2006).

1.3. Miscellaneous factors

The academic performance of the students also rely on a various socioeconomic variables like students' participation in the class, family back ground, teacher-student ratio, presence of qualified teachers in school and gender of the student. Trust and a feeling of belonging appear to be key factors to strengthen student relationships and to support academic achievement. Family and school may be most effective in supporting the academic achievement of students during the transition to middle level schools. Researchers have demonstrated that the performance of the students depended upon several factors like, learning facilities, age and gender differences. Though these factors strongly influence the performance of the students, they differ from country to country and person to person.

V. CONCLUSION

Adolescence is a time of great potential and this growing period has enormous importance for the design of instructional environments, especially those for susceptible learners. Moreover, adolescents usually value independence from adult authority, which can lead adolescents into oppositional behaviour from skipping school to defying teachers to unwanted habits which ominously affect their academic performance. Along with creating a climate of trust and a feeling of belonging, providing students with instruction in social skills with peers and adults in a school will benefit academic performance of students in school.

Schools need to create conducive atmosphere, which means that the school and classroom environment should be one where there is least possibility for any threat, and have a sense of belonging. Activities in the syllabus in each subject should be meaningful and collaborative, where students are encouraged to become responsible for their own learning as well as helping others to learn (Madrid, 1993). The environment should also allow students to interact with their peers in a natural setting. The researches on the subject suggest that rather than focusing exclusively on either Parental involvement or the school environment, the combination of both family and school factors may be most effective in supporting the academic achievement of students during the

transition to middle level schools. And it should help policy makers in the country in general and in the state in particular to design and improvise strategies to improve students' performance on one hand and improve the efficiency of education on the other hand.

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